



Connecticut Department of Public Health

Testimony Presented Before the Appropriations Committee

March 25, 2022

**Commissioner Manisha Juthani, MD
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HB 5434 An Act Concerning Legislative Approval of the Expenditure of Federal Block Grant Funding

The Department of Public Health (DPH) provides the following information on House Bill 5434, which will require legislative review and approval when state agencies receive additional block grant funding. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important issue.

The Department is the lead state agency for the Preventive Health and Health Services Block Grant (PHHSBG) and the Maternal and Child Health Services Block Grant (MCHBG). When developing annual allocation plans for these grants, DPH relies upon the guidance of outside subject matter experts and agency program staff. The PHHSBG allocation plan is developed in collaboration with an Advisory Committee, and the MCHBG allocation plan is informed by a Coalition of over 120 individuals representing 97 organizations. Public hearings and opportunities to comment on both block grants are conducted in accordance with federal requirements. Proposed allocation plans are reviewed and approved by the Office of Policy and Management and then submitted for legislative consideration. Overall, the block grant allocation plan process is time consuming and labor intensive.

In accordance with Section 4-28b CGS, after recommended allocations have been approved or modified, any proposed transfer to or from any specific allocation of a sum or sums of over \$50,000 or ten per cent of any such specific allocation, whichever is less, must be submitted for action by the committees of cognizance. This bill would apply the same formal legislative review and approval process to instances in which additional funding of \$10,000 or more is received under a federal block grant. The department believes that this requirement would impede our ability to expeditiously utilize additional resources to be responsive to community service needs. Often, and especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, there is a very short time frame between a notice of an increased or supplemental block grant award and the date by which the state's application is due to the federal funding agency. Allocating time for legislative review and approval as proposed in this bill would significantly decrease the amount of time for development of these proposals and risk our ability to secure funding.

The Department respectfully requests that this bill not move forward and recommends that annual proposed block grant allocation plans continue to be reviewed under current law protocols.

Thank you for your consideration of this information. The Department encourages committee members to reach out with any questions.

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